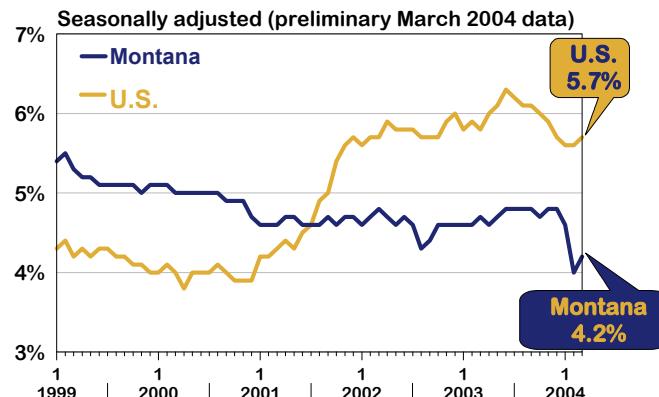


MONTANA

Economy at a Glance

Unemployment

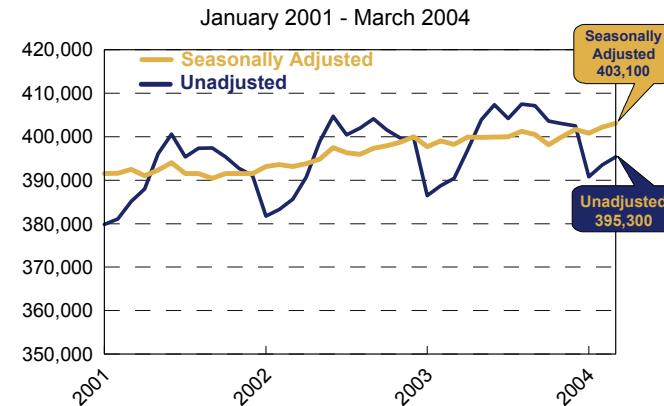


Montana's seasonally adjusted unemployment rate continues to be lower than the U.S. rate. The state's March unemployment rate of 4.2 percent was 1.5 percentage points lower than the nation's.

Earnings

Average weekly earnings for Montana's private sector production workers were up 1.3 percent over the year for March, four-tenths of a percentage point below the 1.7 percent over-the-year increase in U.S. inflation.

Nonfarm Employment Series



Montana's seasonally-adjusted, nonagricultural payroll employment was up about 4,900 jobs (1.2 percent) over the year for March. The largest over-the-year gains were in construction; trade, transportation and utilities; financial activities; and private education and health services.

UNEMPLOYMENT BY COUNTY

Not seasonally adjusted

	Mar. 2004*	Mar. 2003
UNITED STATES	6.0%	6.2%
MONTANA	5.1%	5.6%
Cascade **	4.6%	5.2%
Missoula **	4.0%	4.6%
Yellowstone **	3.5%	4.1%
Beaverhead	3.9%	5.1%
Big Horn	13.5%	18.3%
Blaine	6.4%	7.0%
Broadwater	4.9%	5.8%
Carbon	4.1%	4.7%
Carter	2.9%	2.3%
Chouteau	3.3%	3.0%
Custer	4.4%	4.5%
Daniels	3.8%	3.3%
Dawson	4.2%	3.4%
Deer Lodge	7.2%	7.6%
Fallon	2.8%	3.8%
Fergus	7.1%	7.0%
Flathead	7.5%	7.0%
Gallatin	2.9%	3.3%
Garfield	3.3%	3.5%
Glacier	13.2%	12.6%
Golden Valley	10.6%	8.8%
Granite	7.7%	9.1%
Hill	4.3%	4.6%
Jefferson	4.8%	5.0%
Judith Basin	5.2%	6.6%
Lake	7.6%	7.9%
Lewis & Clark	4.2%	4.6%
Liberty	4.2%	3.3%
Lincoln	16.2%	20.0%
McCone	2.6%	3.3%
Madison	5.2%	5.9%
Meagher	6.3%	6.7%
Mineral	9.4%	11.9%
Musselshell	7.7%	8.0%
Park	5.1%	6.3%
Petroleum	5.4%	9.6%
Phillips	6.7%	6.7%
Pondera	6.8%	5.1%
Powder River	5.6%	5.1%
Powell	7.2%	6.9%
Prairie	9.2%	4.8%
Ravalli	5.9%	6.3%
Richland	5.5%	7.0%
Roosevelt	8.3%	7.8%
Rosebud	6.4%	6.0%
Sanders	9.9%	11.0%
Sheridan	5.2%	4.3%
Silver Bow	5.5%	5.5%
Stillwater	3.4%	3.2%
Sweet Grass	3.6%	2.8%
Teton	3.9%	4.2%
Toole	2.8%	3.1%
Treasure	5.9%	7.0%
Valley	4.2%	4.3%
Wheatland	4.5%	5.6%
Wibaux	4.5%	3.6%

*March 2004 rate preliminary

** Cascade=Great Falls MSA

Missoula= Missoula MSA

Yellowstone=Billings MSA

CURRENT POPULATION SURVEY

More Montana Women in the Civilian Labor Force than Men

The next series of articles will focus on Montana's Civilian Labor Force.

The Current Population Survey (CPS) is the regular monthly survey of about 50,000 households nationally and roughly 1,000 in Montana. The U.S. Census Bureau conducts the survey for the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS). The following data comes from the CPS 2002 annual averages, "Employment status of the civilian, noninstitutional population" table for Montana.

In 2002, Montana had about 358,000 civilian, noninstitutional women compared to 348,000 men. Of these women, 217,000 were in the labor force (16+ years old).

See the chart below for a comparison of the Montana women's labor force by age group.

Find more CPS information at:

<http://stats.bls.gov/cps>

Age Group	Population	Labor Force	Percent of Population Group
16-19 yrs	23,000	12,000	54.4
20-24 yrs	28,000	21,000	76.4
25-34 yrs	50,000	38,000	77.1
35-44 yrs	68,000	56,000	81.6
45-54 yrs	70,000	54,000	77.5
55-64 yrs	48,000	29,000	60.7
65+ yrs	N/A	N/A	N/A

Why Are the Nonfarm Employment Estimates Revised?

Each year, the Research & Analysis Bureau releases revised employment estimates for the state and Metropolitan Statistical Areas (MSAs) for the preceding two years.

Sometimes this is followed by questions concerning the accuracy of sample survey-based estimates in general. To understand the statistical process and methodology developed by the Bureau of Labor Statistics used by all states and the nation, calls for more information than can be produced in a couple of paragraphs. A more complete explanation of employment revisions and how Montana's economy fared in 2003 will be in the first quarter *Employment and Labor Force Trends*. (Publication should be out by end of June 2004.)

The most important concept to understand is that the employment data released each month by the Montana Department of Labor and Industry is strictly an estimate derived from a sample of employers across the state. There are about 29,000 employers in the Unemployment Insurance Program (UI) of which approximately 2,500 supply employment information for the monthly estimates. The sample is representative enough to capture most of the change that occurs within an area or industry, but it won't capture all of it. We try to lessen the magnitude of sample error by researching each area prior to producing employment estimates by reviewing business openings, closures or any other significant economic events to ensure we include as much information as possible.

The annual revision process is known as "benchmark" and again the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) prescribes the methodology for the revision. Each fall, BLS reviews each states' employment estimates and compares them to the universal employment count derived from the quarterly UI Covered Employment and Wages reporting. After all records have been reviewed and edited, each state uses these records to compute the total employment by industry. The main focus on adjustments centers on March's employment level. So once March's new employment levels are established through the benchmark, the estimates for April through December can be recomputed based upon this new level. Please review the historical employment tables on our website with our updated employment information. **For example, the monthly estimates last year indicated a decline for several months in the over-the-year comparisons, and benchmark revisions revealed just a slower growth situation.** The new updated historical table now indicates the last negative employment situation happened in October 1987. For more information on benchmarking, contact John Zavalney, Research and Analysis Bureau, 406-444-3245.

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